

How documentation needs to change as language revitalization progresses

MARSDEN FUND

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Outline of talk

- Background on Māori, a revitalized indigenous language
- Current state of Māori in terms of documentation
- Urgent needs are documenting existing language use for future development
- An example of pronunciation aid tool in development, based on documentation
- Conclusions on changes needed



Māori: a “revitalized” language

- Only indigenous language of New Zealand
- Well known for ‘success’ of kohanga reo (Early childhood language nests) and kura kaupapa Māori (Māori-immersion schools)
- Māori Language Act (1987)
- Government support for Māori language initiatives, including Māori TV, Māori radio, Māori–medium education, etc.



Revitalized Māori “speakers”

- Generation of Māori speakers, in their 20s, that have learnt Māori primarily thru involvement in initiatives such as kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori etc. etc.
- Many in their 30s/40s have learnt Māori as L2, after the compulsory school sector
- Still native speakers, mostly 60+, learnt Māori as L1, may have spoken little Māori in adulthood, but use more Māori in recent times



Revitalized speakers, 20s

- Now are sending their children to kohanga etc.
- Many are working in Māori language industry as teachers, broadcasters, media, government etc.
- Numerically small, highly influential, possibly influencing the speech of native speakers.
- Documentation needs, for Māori are now different



Māori documentation

- Very good written records of language, since of the 1840s, many of which are online or will be soon (e.g. Māori language newspapers)
- Good quality dictionaries, almost all available online. Excellent grammars (books only)
- Media resources, e.g. , Māori TV, government resources readily available



Māori IT resources

- Google Māori
- Microsoft Office/ Internet Explorer available in Māori
- Māori fonts/Unicode freely available
- Māori websites



Māori documentation gaps

- Reasonable high quality samples of speech since 1940s, projects MAONZE & others recording more for acoustic analysis
- One Broadcast corpus, Mary Boyce
- Major Gaps: children's Māori and current Māori being used by younger speakers



Why focus on younger speakers ?

- Māori-medium education has its own curriculum statements which have prescriptive (non-evidenced based) statements on language use, i.e. policy and language planning issues
- Māori, as a language is changing as a result of contact with English; need to document change (over generations) and not expect younger speakers to speak like their grandparents



Focus shift on documentation

- Good historical records exist, still little is known about younger speakers' Māori
- Sometimes younger speakers are criticised in the media as not sounding authentic or using simplified Māori
- Need for education and explanation of changes over generations
- Resource development/corpus planning for younger speakers needs to be targeted and relevant to ensure that they pass the language on

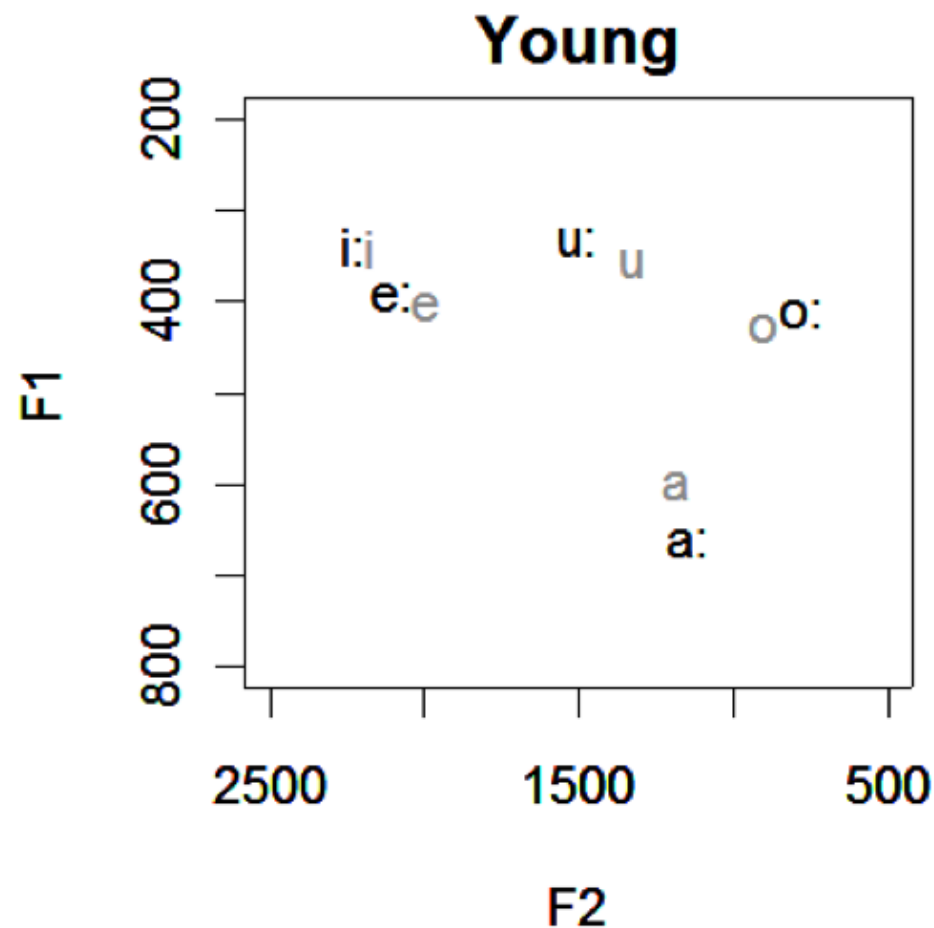
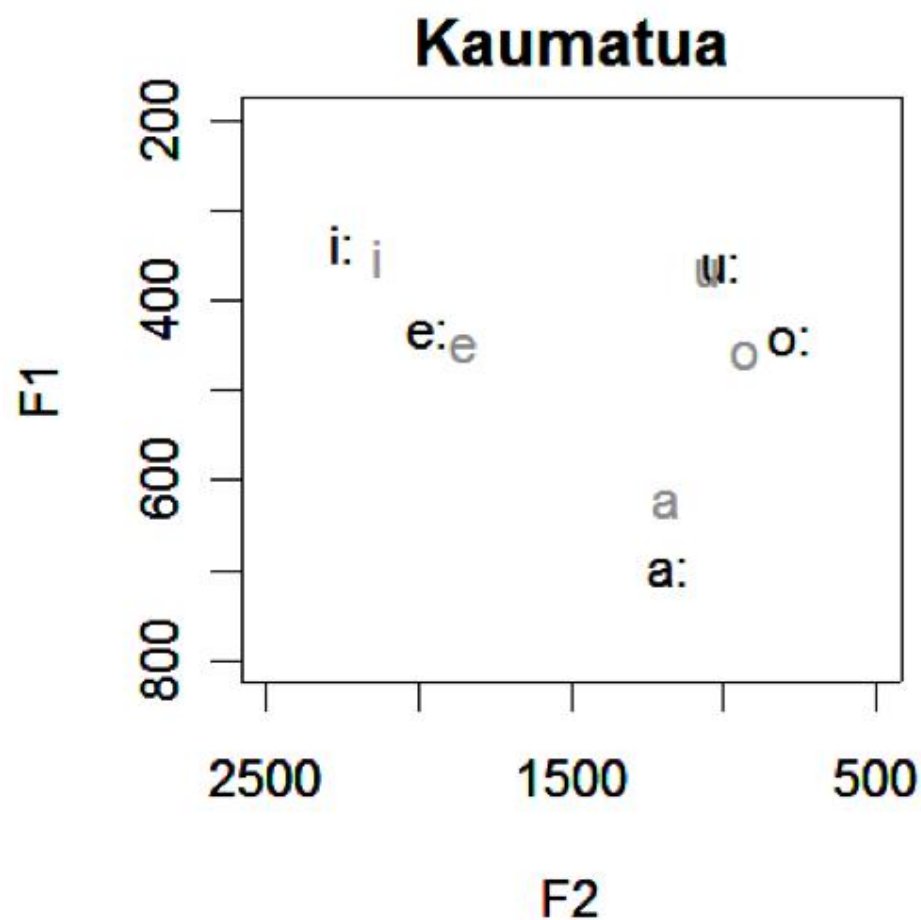


Example of aid based on documentation

- MAONZE project analyzing change in pronunciation over time
- Providing documentation of pronunciation of kaumatua (elder 60+) and younger speakers (20s/30s)
- Pronunciation aid, developed by Jonathan Smith and Catherine Watson (University of Auckland) based on documentation
- Computer based for younger generation

Māori vowel quality change over time

(see Harlow et al.)

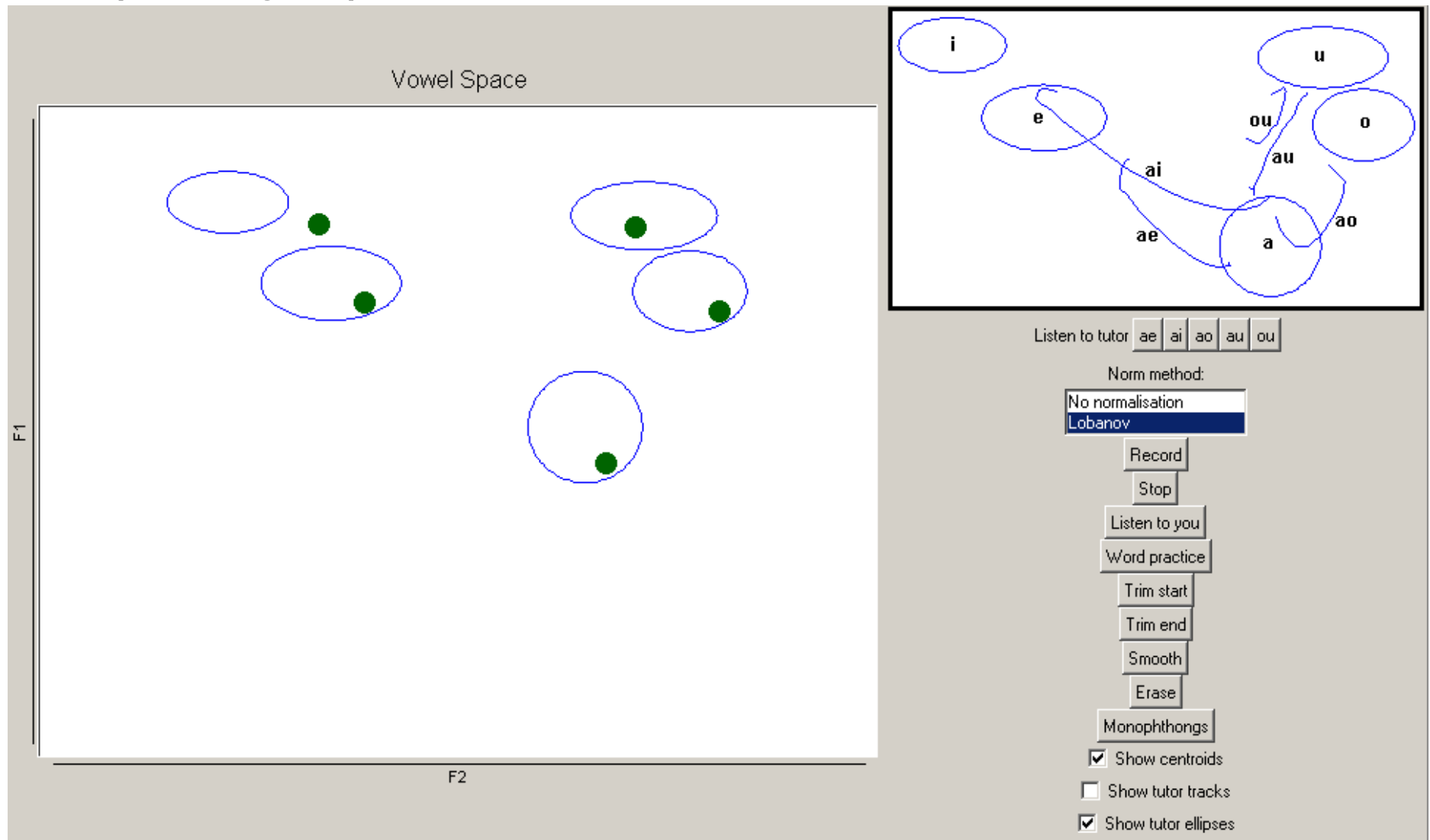




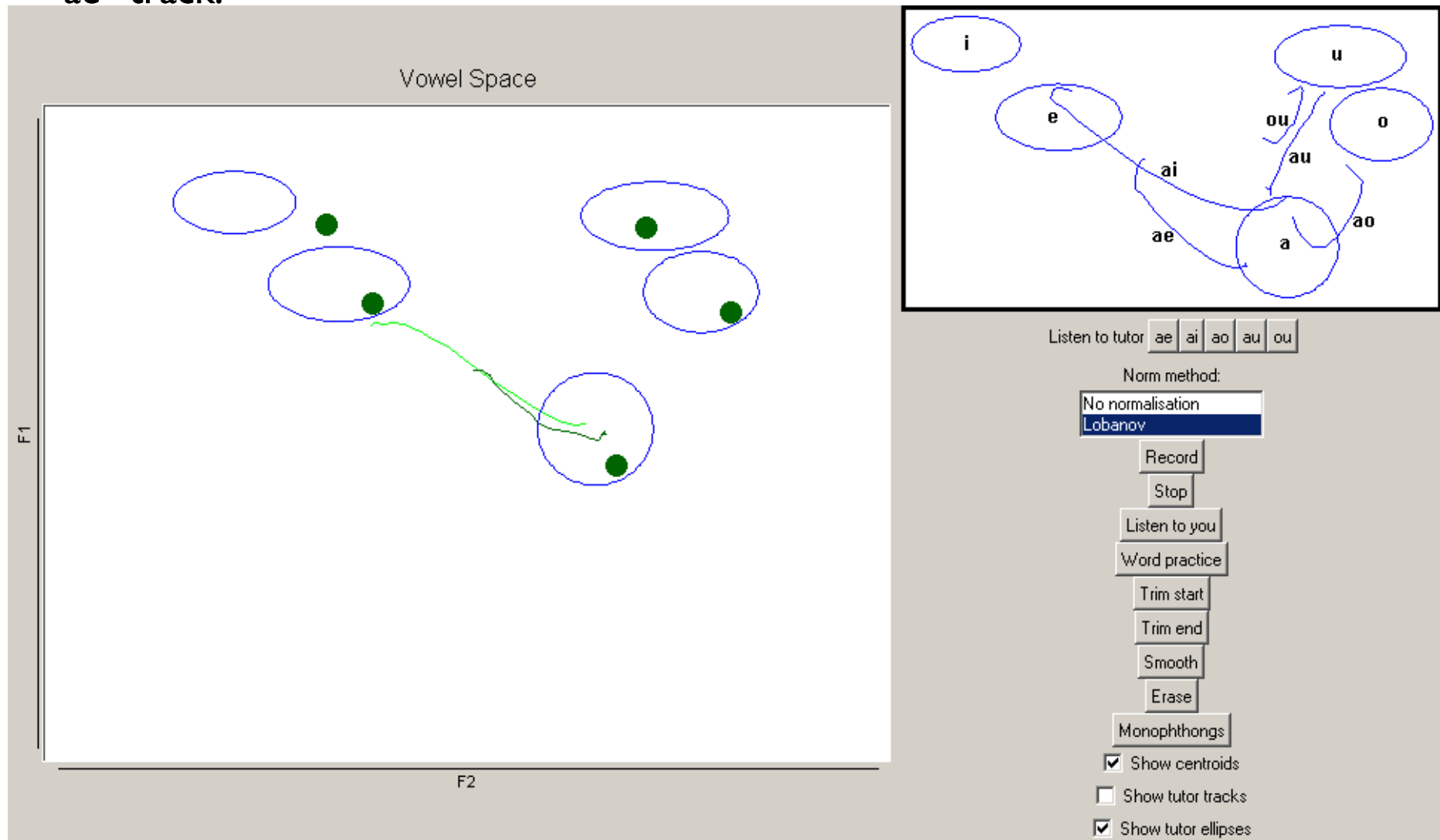
Māori pronunciation tool

- Tool currently being developed by the MAONZE team which enables speakers to compare their vowel production with earlier generations
- Tool gives users the chance to hear vowels being produced by an earlier generation and to attempt to model that vowel, their attempts are graphed on a formant chart
- This is done in real time for immediate feedback

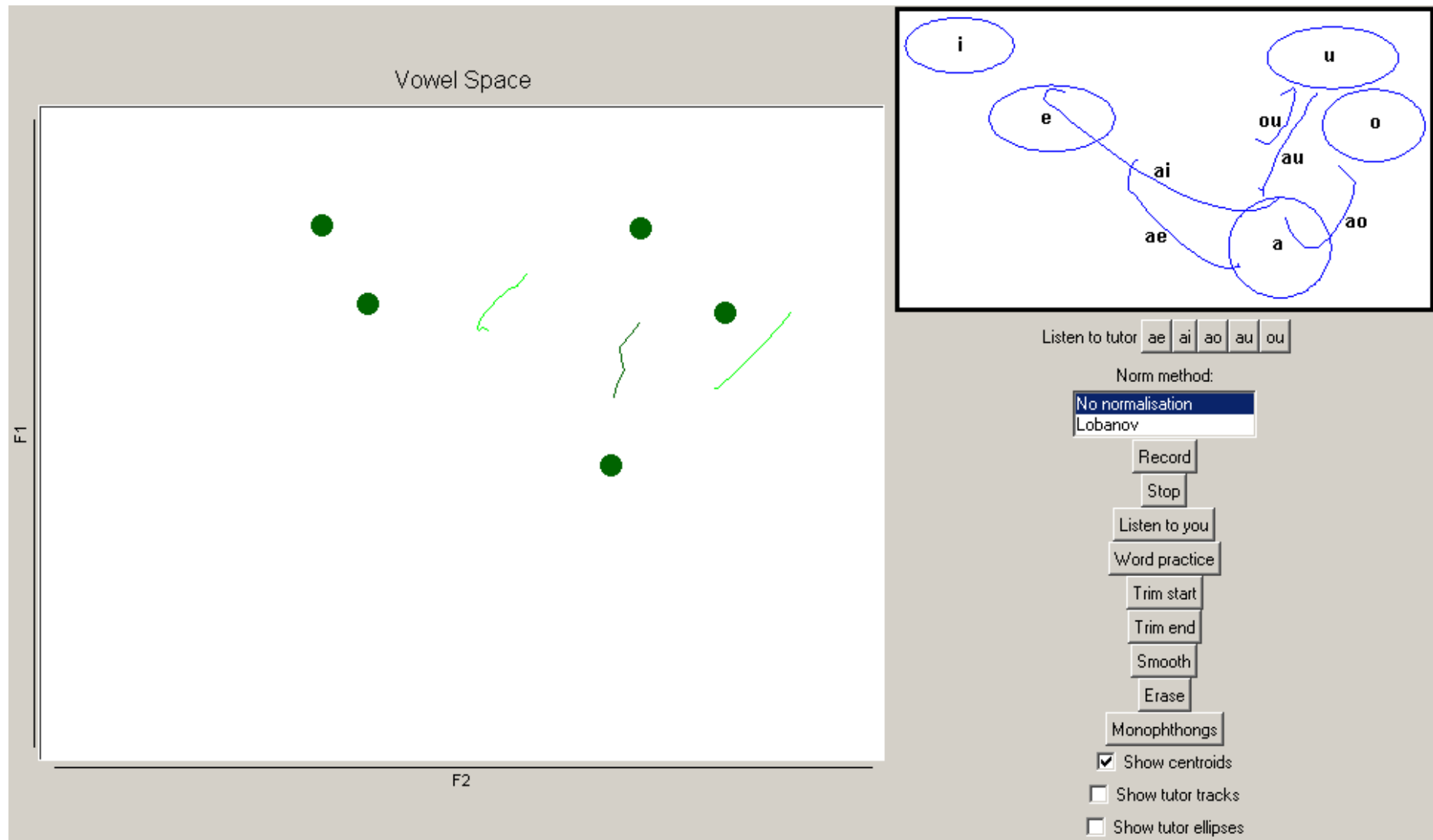
The graph shows the user centroids in green for each of the monophthongs/point vowels. The kaumatua 'elder' target monophthong ellipses are shown in blue.



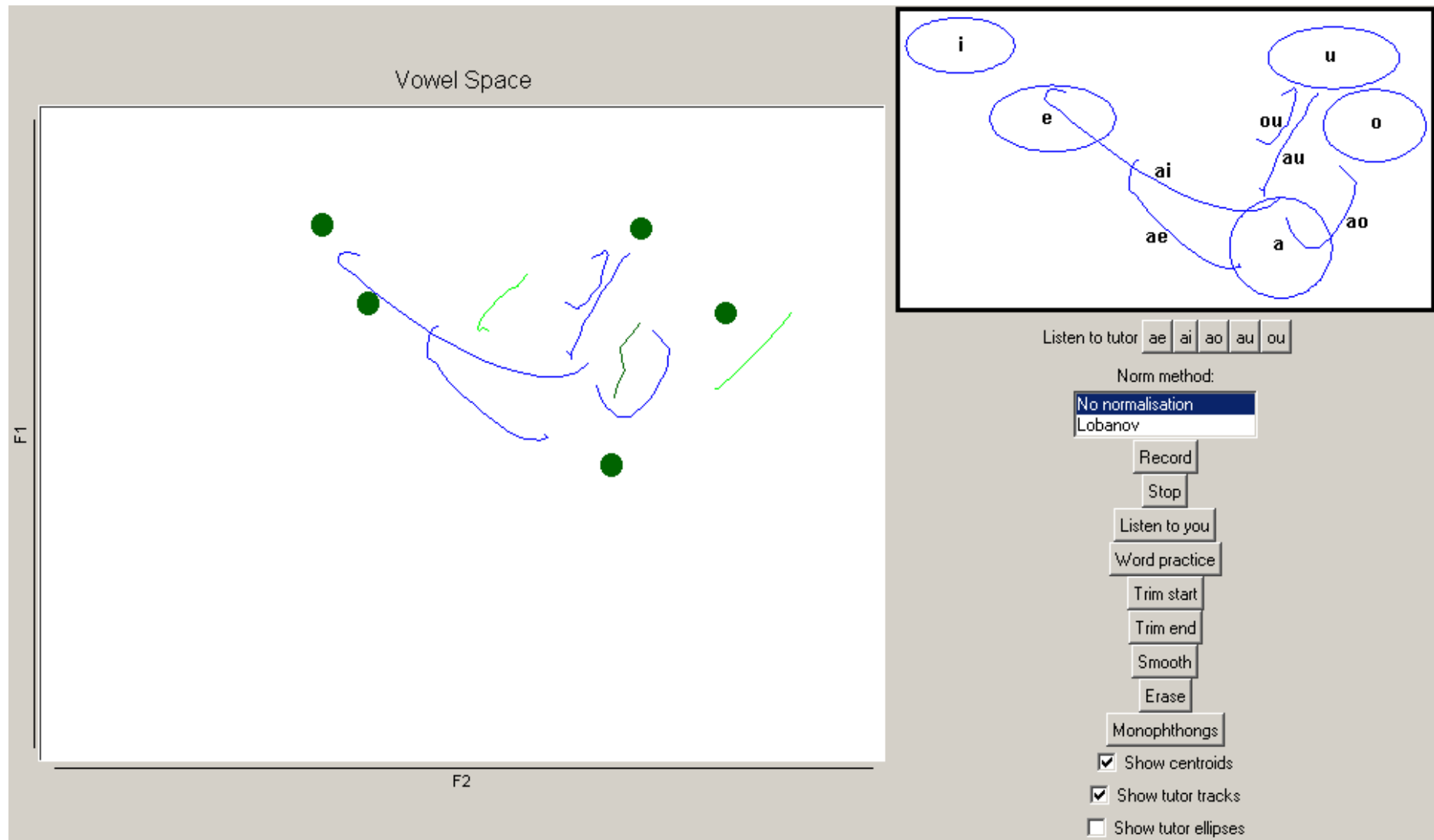
The user is improving their “ae” vowel as in “Paeroa”. The light green shows the user’s first attempt. By comparing this to the kaumatua plot in the top right, the user sees that their pronunciation is closer to the vowel track marked “ai”. The dark green line shows the user’s second attempt. It is a close match to the target “ae” track.



The picture shows several attempts at the vowel “au”. The last attempt (shown in dark green) looks reasonably accurate when compared to the kaumatua targets in the top right.



The kaumatua tracks are shown along side the user's tracks. This picture suggests that the user still has room for improvement. The ideal goal would be for the user's track to lie on top of the kaumatua track





Conclusions

- Māori, which is to some extent a revitalized language and has good documentation of older speakers, still requires ongoing documentation
- Change of emphasis: need has shifted from preserving the language to providing documentation of current speech, to understand changes and resources, and to assist those passing the language on to the next generation
- Tool /resource development requires documentation

References

MAONZE website

<http://www.ece.auckland.ac.nz/~cwat057/MAONZE/MAONZE.html>

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